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July 8, 2025

The Honorable Anna Caballero
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 412
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1376 (Bonta), Juvenile probation and youth treatment reform – OPPOSE

Dear Senator Caballero,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our concerns with AB 1376 (Bonta), which would significantly limit judicial discretion and local flexibility in managing juvenile probation cases by capping probation terms, restricting available accountability tools, and removing mandated rehabilitative conditions.

Kern County is committed to the rehabilitation of youth involved in the justice system, but we believe this bill undermines the ability of courts and probation departments to apply appropriate interventions. Arbitrarily limiting probation to 9 months, with extensions only allowed in restrictive increments and under heightened burdens, places artificial constraints on the court's ability to support meaningful rehabilitation. Many youth require more time to complete school, counseling, treatment programs, or make meaningful behavioral changes while under probation supervision. Mechanisms currently exist to petition the courts to review and consider discharge from probation. The courts also currently have the authority to set review hearings at their discretion on an individual case basis. This bill, however, moves away from individualized approaches and attempts to mandate discharge absent extension by preponderance of evidence.

Wardship probation is already reserved for circumstances involving more serious offenses and when deemed necessary and appropriate for the safety of the youth and the community. Youth who have been made wards of the court have been determined by the court to need focused services, programming and treatment that may extend beyond 9 months. It is important to highlight that wardship can include the most serious and violent 707(b) offenses and therefore the ability for individualized approaches is paramount. This bill establishes a probation term for wardship, which is deemed at the higher end of the juvenile continuum, for shorter durations than diversion or DEJ.

We are concerned that by setting a presumption for mandatory discharge at 9 months, even with the potential to extend, that it will have unintended public safety consequences. It is important to note that while courts in some counties have established timelines for reviewing, there are none that require the outcome of that review to be a discharge from probation, nor are there any that have adopted a presumption of discharge from probation. This is because the system is premised on individualized probation terms designed to best meet the rehabilitative and criminogenic needs of each youth and young adult served.

Additionally, the removal of the court's authority to impose modest fines or assign work programs limits options for promoting accountability in ways that are often less punitive and more constructive than other interventions. While the intent may be to reduce the financial impact on families, this blanket restriction eliminates tools that local courts can apply judiciously and compassionately.

Finally, removing mandatory rehabilitative conditions for certain offenses erodes longstanding practices that help address the root causes of juvenile misconduct. Rehabilitative mandates like counseling, community service, or restitution foster responsibility and support youth development when properly applied.

Kern County urges the Legislature to reject this bill in its current form and preserve local discretion in juvenile justice to ensure the safety, rehabilitation, and long-term well-being of our youth and communities. For these reasons, the Kern County Board of Supervisors respectfully requests that you vote **NO on AB 1376**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Leticia Perez', with a stylized, cursive script.

Leticia Perez, Chair
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Appropriations Committee
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
Kern County Probation Department
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange